

II. AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Currently amended) A manifold assembly comprising:

 a collar having a substantially vertical side wall including a bottom periphery region forming a skirt;

 a base having a peripheral portion;

 a first seal positioned between the collar and the base wherein the skirt sealingly positions over the peripheral portion of the base;

 a first sample-processing device having an outer perimeter edge wherein the collar is positioned on the outer perimeter edge of the first sample processing device;

 a second seal comprising a gasket positioned between the first sample processing device and the collar; and

 a second sample processing device stacked below said first sample processing device to form an integral stacked unit preventing relative movement between said first and second devices, said stacked unit positioned between said collar and said base, ~~and said collar is positioned on the outer perimeter edge of said first sample processing device~~;

 a first seal between said collar and said base; and

 a second seal comprising a gasket between said first sample processing device and said collar.

2. (Previously amended) The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein said first sample processing device is a multiwell filtration plate.

3. (Original) The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein the first sample processing device is selected from the group consisting of filter plates, chromatography plates, DNA capture plates,

RNA capture plates, plasmid capture plates, flow directors and combinations thereof.

4. (Original) The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein the second sample processing device is selected from the group consisting of filter plates, chromatography plates, DNA capture plates, RNA capture plates, plasmid capture plates, spacers, support plates, flow directors, wicks, MALDI target trays, MALDI targets, collection plates and combinations thereof.

5. (Previously amended) The manifold of claim 1, wherein the first sample processing device is a multiwell filtration device and the second sample processing device is a collection plate.

6. (Original) The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein said first seal is a gasket.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Original) The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein said first seal allows for variability in the height of said first and second devices.

9. (Currently amended) The manifold assembly of claim 1, ~~wherein said collar has substantially vertical side walls, and wherein said first seal is created with a gasket positioned within said base, said sealing being along the substantially vertical side walls of said collar.~~

10. (Original) The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein said first and second seal are a unitary seal.

11. (Original) The manifold assembly of claim 1, further comprising a vacuum source, and wherein said base comprises a port for communication with said vacuum source.

12. (Original) The manifold assembly of claim 1, further comprising a vacuum source, and wherein said collar comprises a port for communication with said vacuum source.

13. (Original) The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein the relative movement of said first and second devices of said integral stack unit is unaffected by the application of vacuum to said manifold.

14. (Currently amended) A manifold assembly comprising:

a collar having a substantially lateral side wall;

a base in sealing engagement with said collar, the base comprising an outer peripheral flange and a side wall which together form a peripheral groove;

a portion of first gasket positioned between the base and the collar wherein a portion of first gasket contacts a slot formed in the collar;

wherein the collar comprises a skirt formed along a bottom periphery of the substantially lateral wall such that the skirt sealingly positions over a peripheral portion of the base; and

a sample processing device; and

a second gasket positioned between the sample processing device and the collar, such that the sample processing is in sealing engagement with said collar.

15. (Original) The manifold assembly of claim 14, further comprising a removable support positioned below said sample processing device.

16. (Original) The manifold assembly of claim 14, wherein said sample processing device is a multiwell filtration plate.

17. (Withdrawn) A method of applying vacuum to a manifold assembly, comprising:
providing a vacuum source; providing a manifold comprising a base, a collar, a first sample processing device and a second device stacked to form a sample processing unit and a port for communication with a vacuum source, said port being formed in a manifold component selected from the group consisting of the base and the collar; positioning said sample processing unit between said base and said collar; positioning said collar on said base; and applying a vacuum to

said manifold with said vacuum source, whereby said collar is forced into sealing engagement with said base and said sample processing unit without causing movement of said sample processing unit.

18. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 17, wherein said first processing device is a filtration plate.

19. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 17, wherein said sealing engagement between said collar and said base is adaptable to different sample processing unit stack heights.

20. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 17, wherein functional inserts are positionable in said base.

21. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 17, wherein said second device is a sample processing device.

22. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 17, wherein said second device is a removable support.

23. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 17, wherein said second device is a MALDI target.

24. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 17, wherein said second device is a collection plate.

25. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 17, wherein said second device is a collection plate containing more than one well.

26. **(Withdrawn)** A method of applying vacuum to a manifold assembly, comprising: providing a vacuum source; providing a manifold comprising a base having a port for communication with said vacuum source, a collar, a first sample processing device; positioning said sample processing device between said base and said collar; positioning said collar on said base; and applying a vacuum to said manifold with said vacuum source, whereby said collar is forced into sealing engagement with said base and said first sampling device without causing

movement of said sample processing device.

27. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 26 further comprising a second sample processing device stacked below the first sample processing device.

28. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 26 further comprising a second sample processing device stacked below the first sample processing device and wherein the second sample processing device is selected from the group consisting of filter plates, chromatography plates, DNA capture plates, RNA capture plates, plasmid capture plates, spacers, support plates, flow directors, wicks, MALDI target trays, MALDI targets, collection plates and combinations thereof.

29. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 26 wherein the first sample processing plate is selected from the group consisting of filter plates, chromatography plates, DNA capture plates, RNA capture plates, plasmid capture plates, flow directors, and combinations thereof.

30. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 26 wherein the first sample processing plate is a filter plate and the filter is selected from the group consisting of glass fibers, glass mats, glass cloths, depth filters, nonwovens, woven meshes, microporous and ultrafiltration membranes.

31. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 26 further comprising a second sample processing device stacked below the first sample processing device, wherein the second sample processing plate is a filter plate and the filter is selected from the group consisting of microporous and ultrafiltration membranes.

32. **(Original)** The manifold assembly of claim 1 wherein the first and second sample processing devices are selected from the group consisting of filter plates, chromatography plates, DNA capture plates, RNA capture plates, plasmid capture plates, spacers, support plates, flow directors, MALDI target trays, MALDI targets, collection plates and combinations thereof.

33. **(Previously amended)** The manifold assembly of claim 13 wherein the first sample

processing device is selected from the group consisting of filter plates, chromatography plates, DNA capture plates, RNA capture plates, plasmid capture plates, spacers, support plates, flow directors, MALDI target trays, MALDI targets, collection plates and combinations thereof.

34. (Previously presented) The manifold assembly of claim 1 wherein the top surface of the first sample processing device lies below the top surface of the collar.

35. (Currently amended) A manifold assembly comprising:

a collar having a substantially vertical side wall including a bottom periphery region forming a skirt;

a base having a peripheral portion wherein the skirt sealingly positions over the peripheral portion of the base;

a first sample processing device having an outer perimeter edge;

a second processing device stacked below said first sample processing device to form an integral stacked unit preventing relative movement between said first and second devices, said stacked unit positioned between said collar and said base, and said collar is positioned on the outer perimeter edge of said first sample processing device; and

a first seal between said collar and said base; and a second seal between said first sample processing device and said collar, wherein said first and second seals are a unitary seal.

36. (Previously presented) The manifold assembly of claim 35 wherein the top surface of the first sample processing device lies below the top surface of the collar.

37. (Previously presented) A manifold assembly comprising:

a base;

a collar comprising a skirt formed along a bottom periphery of a lateral wall such that the skirt positions over a peripheral portion of the base;

a first sample processing device comprising a multiwell filtration plate or a single well filtration device;

a second processing device stacked below said first sample processing device to form an integral stacked unit preventing relative movement between said first and second devices, said stacked unit positioned between said collar and said base;

a first seal between said collar and said base; and

a second seal between said first sample processing device and said collar, wherein said first and second seals are a unitary seal;

wherein the first sample processing device is seated recessed within the collar such that the top surface of the first sample processing device lies below the top surface of the collar.

38. (New) The manifold assembly of claim 14, further comprising a vacuum source, and said base comprises a port for communication with said vacuum source.

39. (New) The manifold assembly of claim 14, further comprising a vacuum source, and said collar comprises a port for communication with said vacuum source.

40. (New) The manifold assembly of claim 14, wherein the relative movement of said first and second devices of said integral stack unit is unaffected by the application of vacuum to said manifold.

41. (New) A manifold assembly comprising:

a base comprising a flat surface and having a peripheral portion;

a collar comprising a substantially vertical side wall including a bottom periphery region forming a skirt and a port for communication with a vacuum source;

a first sealing gasket positioned between the base and the collar wherein the skirt sealingly positions over the peripheral portion of the base; and

a first sample processing device having an outer perimeter edge wherein the collar is sealingly positioned on the outer perimeter edge of the first sample processing device, and

a second seal comprising a gasket positioned between the first sample processing device and the collar.

42. (New) The manifold assembly of claim 41 wherein the base is selected from the group consisting of a bench top, a floor and a wall.

43. (New) The manifold assembly of claim 41, further comprising a removable support positioned below said sample processing device.

44. (New) The manifold assembly of claim 41, wherein the first sample processing device is a multiwell filtration plate.

45. (New) The manifold assembly of claim 41, further comprising a vacuum source.

46. (New) The manifold assembly of claim 41, wherein the first sample processing device is selected from the group consisting of filter plates, chromatography plates, DNA capture plates, RNA capture plates, plasmid capture plates, flow directors and combinations thereof.

47. (New) The manifold assembly of claim 46, further comprising a second sample processing device stacked below the first sample processing device to form an integral stacked unit positioned between the collar and the base.

48. (New) The manifold assembly of claim 47, wherein the second sample processing device is selected from the group consisting of filter plates, chromatography plates, DNA capture plates, RNA capture plates, plasmid capture plates, spacers, support plates, flow directors, wicks, MALDI target trays, MALDI targets, collection plates and combinations thereof.